

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-13

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SCI-06 OMB-01 SS-20 HEW-08 DODE-00 L-03 AID-20 AGR-20

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P R 061508Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2692

INFO AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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SUBJ: STATEMENTS BY NEW TURK GOVERNMENT ON OPIUM

REF: A. ANKARA 896; B. ANKARA 632; C. ANKARA 824

BEGIN SUMMARY: FONMIN GUNES, IN TWO NEWSPAPER INTZRKA VIEWS, STATED THE NEED FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US ON THE OPIUM QUESTION. MEANWHILE PRIMIN ECEVIT, IN A RECENT TELEVISION INTERVIEW, REITERATES HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION, AS ENUNCIATED IN THE COALITION PROTOCOL AND POLICY PROGRAM, THAT A SOLUTION TO THE POPPY GROWERS' PROBLEMS WILL BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF BROADER HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. FONMIN TURAN GUNES, IN A FEBRUARY 5 NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW WITH MILLIYET COLUMNIST NILUFER YALCIN, OBSERVED THAT "THE TURKISH PEASANT, WHO BEARS NONE OF THE FAULT (FOR UNCLASSIFIED

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THE OPIUM BAN), IS ASSUMING A RESPONSIBILITY TOO HEAVY FOR

HIM TO CARRY. FOR THIS REASON WE WILL NEGOTIATE THE (OPIUM) QUESTION AGAIN WITH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT. ALSO, FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF TURKISH LAW, DECISIONS PERTAINING TO OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION SHOULD BE BASED ON SOUNDER LEGAL DOCUMENTS (SIC)". LATER ON IN THE INTERVIEW, GUNES STATED THAT "TURKEY CONSIDERS IT A DUTY TO HUMANITY TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST NARCOTICS. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR OUR COUNTRY TO ASSUME THE ENTIRE SACRIFICE OF SUCH A FIGHT. THOSE CONCERNED IN THIS FIGHT FOR HUMANITY SHOULD MAKE SACRIFICES ACCORDING TO THEIR STRENGTH AND POSSIBILITIES".

2. ALSO SAMI KOHEN ISTANBUL- BASED STRINGER FOR BRITISH NEWSPAPER GUARDIAN, HAS REPORTED IN FEBRUARY 4 EDITION OF GUARDIAN HIS INTERVIEW OF FEBRUARY 3 WITH GUNES ON OPIUM AND OTHER SUBJECTS. ACCORDING TO KOHEN, WHEN "ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD LIFT THE BAN, THE MINISTER SAID THE DECISION WOULD DEPEND ON THE TALKS WITH THE AMERICANS. MR. GUNES SAID IT WAS UNJUST THAT TURKISH FARMERS SHOULD BEAR THE BURDEN AND SACRIFICE TO SERVE HUMAN (SIC) CONSIDERATIONS". KOHEN GOES ON TO SPECULATE THAT THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO REVISE THE BAN ON OPIUM PRODUCTION INTRODUCED IN 1971 AFTER PRESSURE FROM THE US, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SOON ASK FOR TALKS WITH THE US TO RECONSIDER THE (OPIUM) AGREEMENT.

3. MEANWHILE, WE HAVE JUST OBTAINED FROM THE MFA THE TEXT OF A JANUARY 31 INTERVIEW GIVEN BY PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT TO TURK HABER AJANSI (THA) TELEVISION WHICH GIVES IN GREATER DETAIL THAN HAS APPEARED TO DATE IN THE PRESS ECEVIT'S VIEWS ON OPIUM. ECEVIT STRESSED THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE FORMER POPPY GROWERS AFTER THE BAN ON CULTIVATION. "GOVERNMENTS HAVE POINTED OUT", HE SAID, "THAT THE PRODUCERS' LOSS WOULD BE MET BY COMPENSATORY PAYMENTS. THE PROBLEM, HOWEVER, DOES NOT END THERE, BECAUSE THE PRODUCERS DEPENDED ON THE SIDE PRODUCTS OF THE OPIUM POPPY, AND ON THE INCOME DERIVED FROM THEM, RATHER THAN ON THE NEW INVESTMENTS BEING MADE TO PREVENT UNEMPLOYMENT AND LOSS OF INCOME. FOR US THE QUESTION OF THE CONDITION OF MILLIONS OF PEASANTS WHO HAD CULTIVATED THE OPIUM POPPY COMES BEFORE THE QUESTION OF OPIUM. BUT IN SEEKING A

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SOLUTION WE WILL NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF THE OPIUM ISSUE".

4. FINALLY, ECEVIT, IN RESPONSE TO OPPOSITION LEADER DEMIREL'S CALL FOR A DECISION BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT WHETHER OR NOT TO REINSTITUTE POPPY GROWING (PARA 3, REF A), RE-READ BEFORE PARLIAMENT ON FEBRUARY 5 THE PORTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY PROGRAM DEALING WITH OPIUM

(REFS B AND C).

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